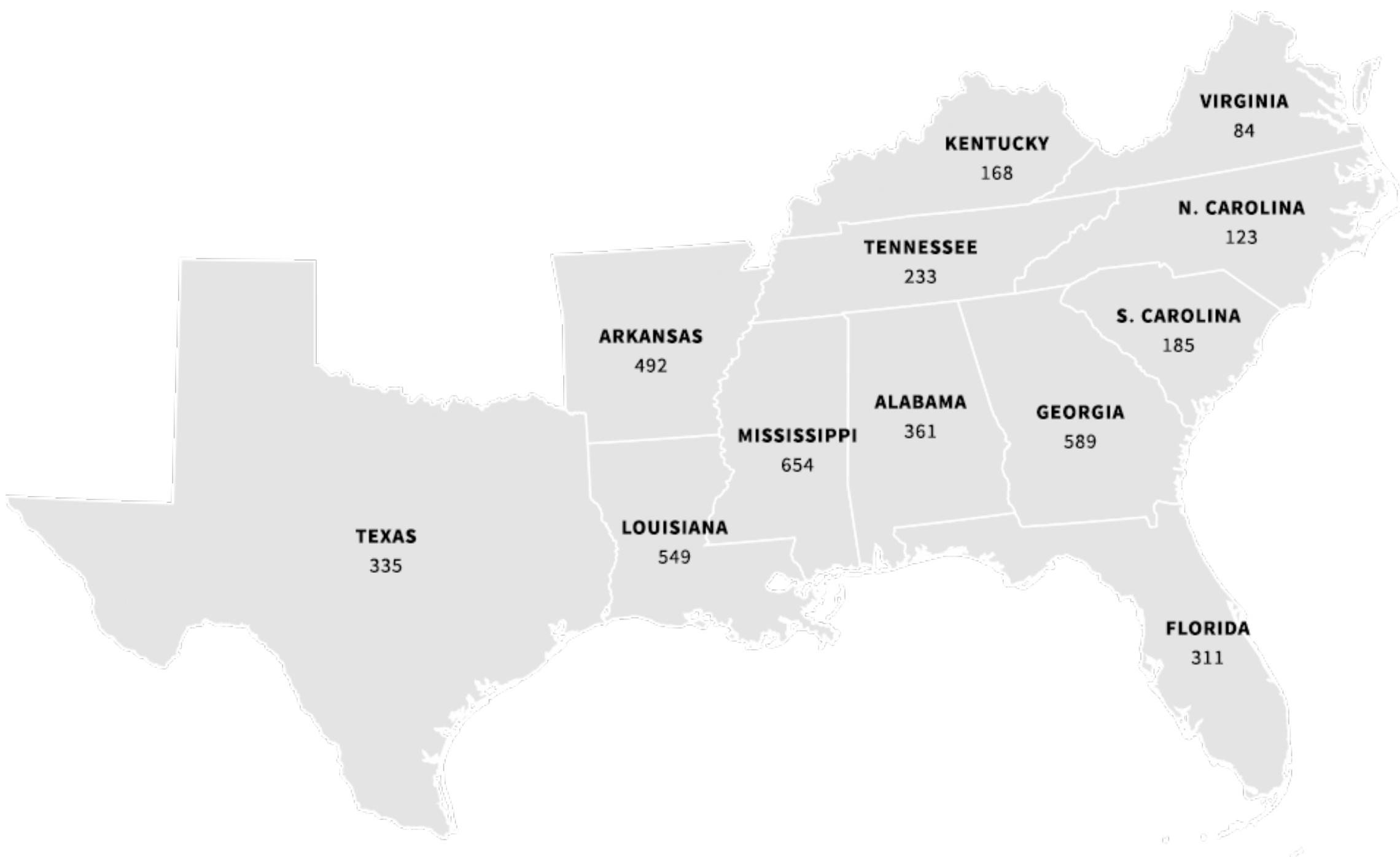


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Confessing Our History of Lynching

Just Matters Session 5

The Color of Compromise

“Jim Crow could not have worked as effectively as it did without the frequent and detestable practice of lynching.”

“Many white Christians failed to unequivocally condemn lynching and other acts of racial terror. Doing so poisoned the American legal system and made Christian churches complicit in racism for generations the majority stance of the American church was avoidance, turning a blind eye to the practice.”

Lynching couldn't have endured without the relative silence, if not outright support, of the Christian churches.

Quoting James Cone -- “Both Jesus and blacks were ‘strange fruit,’ . . . Theologically speaking, Jesus was the ‘first lynchee,’ who foreshadowed all the lynched black bodies on American soil.”

The Cross and the Lynching Tree -- James Cone “Howard Thurman said, ‘[a person] has to . . . handle suffering or be handled by it.’”

“Whether we speak of Jonathan Edwards, Walter Rauschenbusch, or Reinhold Niebuhr as America’s greatest theologian, none of them made the rejection of white supremacy central to their understanding of the gospel. Reinhold Niebuhr could write and preach about the cross with profound theological imagination and say nothing of how the violence of white supremacy invalidated the faith of white churches. It takes a lot of theological blindness to do that, especially since the vigilantes were white Christians who claimed to worship the Jew lynched in Jerusalem. What is invisible to white Christians and their theologians is inescapable to black people.”

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS)

“Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome is a condition that exists when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of slavery and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism today. Added to this condition is a belief (real or imagined) that the benefits of the society in which they live are not accessible to them.”

Criterion A: Stressor “The person was exposed to: death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence, as follows: (1 required)

- Direct exposure
- Witnessing in person
- Indirectly, by learning that a close relative or close friend was exposed to trauma. If the event involved actual or threatened death it must have been threatened or accidental.

- Repeated or extreme indirect exposure to aversive details of the event(s), usually in the course of professional duties (e.g., first responders, collecting body parts; professionals repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse). This does not include indirect non-professional exposure through electronic media, television, movies, or pictures.”

Examples of the effect of any one of the stressors might be:

Persistent (and often distorted) negative belief about oneself or the world
Feeling alienated from others
Irritable or aggressive behavior
Self-destructive or reckless behavior

What is the legacy?

“... significant life-threatening experiences alter genetic coding and this is heritable in subsequent generations. Therefore, it stands to reason, that a child conceived (Post Trauma) will acquire adaptive genetic information.”

“The legacy of trauma is also passed down through extended family, and community.”

Vacant Esteem (judgment of worth and value) is a symptom of PTSS, passed from generation to generation through family, community, and society (Booker T. Washington's view that tradesman was the appropriate role for African Americans -- too many bought into this idea)

Black young men aren't "afraid to die. They are afraid to live."
Invited suicide is an indication of vacant esteem.

Another indication of vacant esteem is the effort to undermine the achievements of other African Americans.

Ever Present Anger -- anger is the normal emotional response to a blocked goal as well as the fear of failure.

“Blacks have been told lies about slavery; lies about being free, about inclusion, about equality and justice; about the pursuit of happiness, security, and prosperity; about civil right, fair housing, education, and jobs.”

“Anger and violence created and maintained the institution of slavery, and the anger and violence continued long after slavery was abolished.”

Racist Socialization -- “My mother told me to never bring home anybody as black as me.” “One of the most insidious and pervasive symptoms of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome is our adoption of the slave master’s value system.”

Where whiteness is seen as superior and blackness as inferior. African Americans have been socialized to something akin to white racists.

“Vacant esteem, ever-present anger, and racist socialization: the effects of almost four centuries of legalized abuse, programmed enslavement, and institutionalized oppression can be seen today . . .” in the PTSS of many African Americans.